# Email Etiquette

At GVSU, we often communicate via email. Here are some tips for sending professional-sounding emails to your instructors or people you don't know within the university. These tips also apply to sending email within professional, workplace contexts.

Make sure your email address is professional sounding. It is the first thing readers will notice about your emails. Avoid odd formatting (LuCkYoNe) and excessive letters or numbers (564BasketballLover789), as they can be confusing to readers. Try not to use nicknames that could someday embarrass you (CuddlyBunny) or inside jokes. The best email addresses incorporate your name or initials; that way, messages from you are easily identifiable.

In addition to having a professional-sounding email address, be sure to use a dependable email service. You don't want to lose important emails or have to change your email address/service every few weeks.

Write an appropriate subject line for your email. The subject line of your email is just as noticeable and important to readers as your email address. Oftentimes, the subject line helps the reader determine when your email should be read (is it immediately important?). In addition, the subject line will help readers to remember what your email said after it has been filed or after a long period has lapsed.

- Make sure your subject line is as specific as possible while still being concise. You don't need to give all of the information pertinent to your message—that is what the message body is for—but the subject line needs to describe what the email will be about.
- Avoid generalizations or language that is too informal and too general, such as "Hey," "What's up?" or "How ya doin?" Some email users have software installed to automatically delete or flag email that appears to host a virus—and those emails often use "Hello" or other informal greetings as subject lines. In addition, a vague and informal subject line won't allow the recipient to file the message in a meaningful way.
- Some examples of professional-sounding and specific subject lines include:
  » Ideas for the March 26th Meeting
  » Inquiry about ENG 354 A
  » Conference about final project
  » Questions about the PT major

Treat the body of the message as you would a more formal letter or memo. You should draft, reread carefully, and run spell check before sending out your email. After all, you want to make a good impression on your professor or supervisor. Additional tips:

- AVOID WRITING IN ALL CAPS, LIKE THIS. It comes across as yelling at readers. In addition, it's harder to read text in all capital letters.
- Make sure you capitalize appropriately: the first letters of proper nouns and the first word of every sentence should be capitalized, just as when you write essays.
- Don't use too many informal abbreviations (IMHO, LOL, b/c) or emoticons, such as :-P. Doing so isn't professional or easy for all readers to understand.
- Don't write more than you need to. After all, email communication is handy because the messages are typically short and can be delivered quickly.
- However, be sure to include all necessary information, especially your name in full, even if it is in your email address. If inviting someone to a meeting—or suggesting a conference with an instructor—be sure the purpose of the meeting/conference is clear.

> If you don't check your email often, give alternate forms of being contacted.

> Avoid using automatic signatures with excessive quotations or inside jokes in them. Evaluate whether the information included in the signature is appropriate for a professional audience.

> Spell-check and proofread your message carefully.